

Draft

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order by Ms. O'Keeffe at 6:30 p.m.

ATTENDANCE:

Present: Stephanie O'Keeffe (Chair), Alisa Brewer, Aaron Hayden (Clerk), Diana Stein, Gerry Weiss, Larry Shaffer (Town Manager)

Others presenting: John Root, David Keenan, Bill Elsassor, Mike Hochniuk, Brad Boucher, Joseph Kimmel, Walter Chudzik (WMECo)

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Root, the Community Division Organizer for the Common Good Bank, is starting the work establish a Common Good Bank in Amherst. The Bank is a virtual bank that offers all the services of a regular bank but returns all of its profits to charities, half to the local community half to selected charities. Anyone can be a member of the Common Good Bank. Mr. Root would like to bring a warrant article this fall to get Town Meeting's support for the Bank. Information about the Bank is at CommonGoodBank.Com or people can contact Mr. Root at jroot@comcast.net

David Keenan submitted a copy of the Town Government Act with some language flagged: He stated that in Town Government everyone wants to do a good job but there are specific tools involved, accurate timely information and their roles as defined by the law. There is a lot of "transencey" in this town. The Town Act will show where governmental initiative comes from. If the responsibility isn't taken up through the right process, and the Select Board acts on the wrong information, the Select Board will become ineffective.

Mr. Keenan would like to talk about the language that describes the legal function of the board, since it is the primary tool of our government.

Bill Elsassor would like to be sure the tulip tree in front of the Lord Jeffery Inn is not cut down. He is concerned that with the work stopped something might happen to this tree and is willing to take care of it. (Diana Stein as liaison to Shade Tree Committee will bring the concern to the Shade Tree Committee.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Amherst Energy Task Force is sponsoring a forum on home energy conservation March 3rd from 6:30 -9:00

The Public Shade Tree Committee is looking for people who care about trees to become Tree Wardens and attend to newly planted trees.

Annual TM calendar update:

Tomorrow is the last day for the Select Board to put questions on ballot

Thursday is the last day to withdraw a candidacy

Monday is the last day for citizens to submit miscellaneous warrant articles for Spring Town Meeting.

The final candidate for school Superintendent is being interviewed tomorrow. There will be the usual public forum and breakfast meeting.

SELECT BOARD'S ACTION

Pole Hearing – WMECO

Public hearing opened at 6:42 p.m.

Closed public hearing at 6:49 p.m.

Larry Shaffer spoke with Tree Warden and no trees will be damaged by this pole placement.

Walter Chudzik described the work: UMass moved this pole 5' from its planned location to allow it to shed more light on the adjacent crosswalk and it is now in the Town Right of Way.

Diana Stein moved to approve, pending permit from the Department of Public Works, the petition from Western Massachusetts Electric Company to set one solely owned pole, 259/1-1, on the westerly side of East Pleasant Street approximately twenty nine (29) feet southerly of Orchard Hill Road. Proposed pole requested by the University of Massachusetts to light a new crosswalk, in accordance with the plan marked 6A710662. Gerry Weiss seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Budget Discussion: Vehicle Inventory & Employee Overtime

Vehicle use and inventory;

This is the next installment of a weekly discussion on the budget, this week we have two specific topics; the vehicle inventory and the effectiveness of using overtime. There have been general questions about the Town's vehicles: David Keenan and Stanley Gawle have both brought to the Select Board their separate concerns about the number of vehicles and their use.

The Select Board has two different lists of vehicles from Mr. Gawle and Mr. Keenan. The differences stem from the different definitions of vehicle, apparatus and equipment and because each list was put together to clarify different aspects of the fleet.

Mr. Keenan feels that the real issue is the transparency regarding what we own and what the policies on their use.

The Town Manager has not completed a comprehensive vehicle study yet. Vehicles are a small but important part of our budget, and employees remain the most expensive and productive part of the budget. Today each department is responsible for their vehicles and keeping the vehicles safe. (It turns out that there is a small window of time in a vehicle's life when it can be sold most profitably; when its resale value is highest and repair costs haven't started to rise.)

Doing a comprehensive inventory is a big project that has to be done step by step. Mr. Shaffer will complete the inventory this year.

There has been a discussion for a central motor pool and centralized repair. Some cities have an enterprise fund to replace vehicles which can smooth out costs and allow depreciation and funding over time. Of course a centralized pool needs a centralized budget and management which is dramatically different than the way we do things now. Since departments have such a wide variety of vehicle needs they would need to be an integral part of developing and changing to a central vehicle pool.

Stephanie O'Keeffe noted the Town self insures its vehicles which lowers the cost.

Mr. Shaffer pointed out that the exposure to indemnification still exists even though we are self-insured though our overhead is less.

MS. O'Keeffe - Will getting rid of older vehicles that are less expensive to own but more expensive to run create savings?

Mr. Shaffer - It seems that there are not any huge savings from changing what we have: the system is working pretty well but we can polish it up. Also on the question of the large number of snow plows for instance, the more plows the more quickly we can get the streets plowed – the number of snow plows and other vehicles is a matter of the productivity we want.

Diana Stein - It would be good to get a log that shows how often vehicles are being use.
Town vehicles should not be taken on vacation, are the regulations being followed (despite a report of a kayak on top of one vehicle)?

Larry Shaffer – the Town Manager's office is drafting a new vehicle use policy that will cover the personal use of vehicles. Some people who are on call all the time need to keep their vehicle with them all the times to be able to respond. Detectives, waste water treatment, fire department vehicles "go home" but we have to be sure they are used correctly and only on Town business.

Gerry Weiss wondered if we should study how often on-call people are in fact called?

Larry Shaffer reported that for AFD officers their vehicle has communication equipment and turn-out gear needed when they are called to respond to a fire even if they are needed a few times each year. For people who don't need to respond with equipment it may be better to simply pay mileage for them to come in with their own car when called. We need to separate the two types of use.

He will propose an annual review as part of the budget process and ask the question "do we need this equipment" each year. While it is a small item in the budget it would be good to develop a system to keep track of things.

Alisa Brewer would like the Select Board to see the new policy when it is ready and to publicize it.

Employee Overtime

What positions are eligible for overtime and what are the costs associated with it. How the decision is made to use OT and not hire additional personnel and what is the effect of reducing or increasing OT.

Mr. Shaffer handed out an OT summary report that showed the effect and cost of new hires filling OT hours. As an example for AFD there was a jump of personnel from 40 to 45 because of a grant and yet the OT costs only fell \$70k. A new hire will work only 1500 hours each year (after training and vacations are subtracted) and will still cost a full salary – the cost of the 5 new hires that would be needed to fill all the OT hours shown on the report is much more than \$70k the OT actually cost.

Ms. Brewer noted that snowstorms drive OT for DPW workers since snow storms don't always arrive during regular business hours. Does it make sense to shift regular hours to meet the predicted snowfall?

Mr. Shaffer pointed out that there is a science to scheduling for snow removal involving predicted snow fall, snow fall rates and quality of snow. The object is to have the removal complete at the end of the storm and to keep the roads passable as much as possible during the snowfall.

Diana Stein wanted to know if Fair Labor Standards act hours were ever exceeded. Mr. Shaffer replied that one of the Town's unions has a contract with a 37.5 hour weeks and so they do get overtime whenever they work more than that, not after 40 hours in a week as allowed in the fair labor act.

For the budget they tried to put the real number in for OT. For AFD OT has been reduced to actual predicted numbers and the repair budget has been increased both to realistic levels – in years past excess in OT budget supported deficits in the repairs budget.

The Select Board would like to support the Town Manager in getting outside (free) help for major events, events like the UMass students' celebration of the Red Sox winning the pennant.

Revising national single payer health care letter. Diana Stein reported that Seattle has a proclamation asking congress to support the national single payer bill (HR 676). She suggested that we do the same thing and will send the actual proclamation from Seattle to our representatives or take the letter and revise it for our congressman. This bill would save the country a lot of money.

The Select Board felt the best way was to modify the letter for our senators (Kennedy is working on a non-single payer bill) without objection.

Revising the annual report: Alisa Brewer has collected all the material needed and it is on track to having the report ready for Town Meeting.

Town Manager's Report

Recent and upcoming activities;

Mr. Shaffer met with 250th parade committee to discuss insurance and organization. He was impressed with organization of parade.

The Town received an invitation to join the Earth Hour Campaign March 28th at 8:30 pm and will turn all the lights off for ½ hour to illustrate need for reducing energy use. Mr. Shaffer strongly supports this world wide effort. (We will turn off lights in Town Hall, emergency services can keep them on.) There will be a celebration on the common.

Update on recovery act – no decision has been made on priorities. The notice, of no decision, was sent Friday.

Founder's Day event was a tremendous event. Adrienne Terrizi will post to the Town web site the times ACTV will be re-broadcasting the event. The copy of the original proclamation of Amherst's becoming a town, a personal gift from Senator Rosenberg and Representative Story, is hanging in the Town Room.

The Middle School pool opened on February 2nd to the swim teams (it was still a little cool) and LSSE started their programs Feb 7th. The notice was on the website. With special thanks to Ron Bohonwicz for working so hard on this, the school superintendents for their cooperation, and the parents for their patience.

The new forms about meter feeding are being placed when a vehicle is in violation of the two hour limit. One month of notices will followed by strict enforcement.

Union's response to COLA letter: AFD sent formal notice that they are not particularly interested though they will come to the table if all the others come to the table (including the school unions). Other unions are willing

to talk but are hesitant to commit until all others have committed – it is inappropriate to ask one group to sacrifice without all the others.

Recent Select Board Meeting broadcast issues: There have been technical problems with the control board at ACTV that should be resolved soon. Our constituents do rely on the meetings being broadcast. The president of ACTV acknowledges their importance and is working to fix the problem.

Stephanie O’Keeffe expressed the Select Board’s desire to have the best quality broadcasts and proposed sending a letter to ACTV. She wondered how viewers can report problems.

Mr. Shaffer noted that the Town has a contract with ACTV, complaints should go to Town Manager’s office and will be passed along.

Diana Stein suggested setting up an emergency phone number.

The Unitization Study of LSSE is done and will be rolled out to the Financial Committee at their Thursday meeting. Linda Chalfant has worked on it very hard and it looks polished. We will be reducing our tax subsidy to almost zero.

Gerry Weiss considered postponing our 2/25 budget meeting: There is a lot of material still missing, especially the Unitization Study and the report of general cuts.

Mr. Shaffer suggested we may want to get ahead of BCG meeting next Monday and that we will get the reductions list and Unitization Report tomorrow. In any event we cannot propose specific layoffs until we are sure we are going to do it and the effected personnel have been notified.

Approve Letter Re: Posting Committee Agendas and Minutes on Website

Stephanie O’Keeffe suggested the letter sets a deadline and that we follow up those who don’t responder. We will ask for an update by the middle of April.

Approve Minutes

Gerry Weiss moved to approve the minutes of the *February 9, 2009* Select Board meeting as amended. Diana Stein seconded and the motion carried with one abstention.

Committee Appointments – Select Board

Gerry Weiss moved to appoint Yuri Friman, to the Town/Commercial Relations Committee, for a term to expire June 30, 2012. Diana Stein seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Gerry Weiss moved to appoint Juliana Dupre, to the Kanegasaki Sister City Committee, for a term to expire June 30, 2012. Diana Stein seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair’s Report

Stephanie O’Keefe is corresponding with town counsel to determine what the Select Board’s role might be in collective bargaining.

Ms. O’Keeffe is working on the draft of February Select Board report.

The BCG is reporting next week on how the FCCC report has informed budget process.

LIAISON AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Aaron Hayden reported the Design Review Board is working through designing the new intersection at Pomery and West Street. Among the design elements is a shared use path that will carry pedestrian and bicycle traffic safely around the intersection to the west of West Street. The path is expected to be integrated into a path that will go over the Notch to the south and into Amherst to the North.

The Committee on Homelessness is meeting regularly and working on establishing an emergency shelter. It may not happen this winter but is being worked on for next winter.

PTBC will inventory bike racks in Town Buildings and now Downtown. PTBC is forming a sub-committee to look for covered bike storage in town.

JCPC is meeting every Thursday at 12:15 to collect information. This week Police and Fire departments are the primary issues as well as equipment and school buildings. The JCPC website has been revamped and improved and there is a lot of good information about the budget process there.

The Parking Task Force is looking at rates and times of meters and clarifying issues.

LICENSES & PERMITS

New Common Victualler's License – Papa Gino's

Mike Hochniuk, regional VP

Brad Boucher, Dist Mgr

Joseph Kimmel, mgr

Presented their plans for opening a new Papa Gino's in Amherst on March 9th

Gerry Weiss is looking forward to having a business at 48 North Pleasant Street again and moved to approve the new Common Victualler's License for Papa Gino's Inc., d/b/a Papa Gino's, 48 North Pleasant Street, (Tucker Taft building) Manager: Joseph Kimmel. Diana Stein seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Special All Alcoholic Liquor License – Hurricane Booster Club (Monte Carlo Night)

Gerry Weiss moved to approve the Special All Alcoholic Liquor License for the Hurricane Booster Club for March 14, 2009 from 6:00 p.m. – 12:00 a.m. at Valentine Hall at Amherst College for Monte Carlo Night. Diana Stein seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Special Wine & Malt Liquor License – Amherst Montessori School

Gerry Weiss moved to approve the Special Wine & Malt Liquor License for the Amherst Montessori School for March 14, 2009 from 7:00 p.m. – 12:00 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center of Amherst for an Auction. Diana Stein seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Next week Gerry Weiss would like us to consider requiring the minutes to show names and decide as group to get them added.

Alisa Brewer noted that we received hearing notices of liquor violations in this week's packet and wondered what the Select Board can do about them.

Gerry Weiss thought the Select Board should get a report on past violations with each application for licenses so we can see if a vendor is getting many violations.

Larry Shaffer agreed that it would be helpful to have such a report when we are considering re-approving a license.

ADJOURNMENT

VOTED unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at 9:05 p.m.

Next meetings

2/23 Land Gifts to Town, Budget discussion, vehicle inventory and OT

2/25 6:30 FY 10 Budget only, cut list and Unitization report.

2/28 Four Towns Budget Meeting at ARMS Library 9-11am

3/2 Committee on Homelessness Report, BCG update

Comments and corrections encouraged

Respectfully submitted;

Aaron Hayden

